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SEPARATION FROM SLAVERY. 7

BEING A CONSIDERATION OF THE INQUIRY,

*"How shall Christians and Christian Churches
best absolve themselves from all responsible
Connection with Slavery?"*

A PREMIUM ESSAY.

BY

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL EVIL THE TRUE OBJECT AND PLATFORM OF THE CHURCH	5
CHRISTIANS RESPONSIBLE TO THE EXTENT OF THEIR POSSIBLE INFLUENCE—A SPECIAL MORAL OBLIGA- TION CREATED BY A SPECIAL PROVIDENTIAL RELA- TION	7
SLAVERY ONE OF THE WORKS OF EVIL DESTINED TO DESTRUCTION	9
TO THE PROPER USE OF THE MEANS THREE THINGS PREREQUISITE:—	
<i>First.</i> A KNOWLEDGE OF THE SYSTEM IN ITS PRINCIPLES AND WORKINGS	11
<i>Second.</i> A THOROUGH HATRED OF IT	12
<i>Third.</i> A FULL CONFIDENCE THAT CHRISTIAN- ITY CAN AND WILL DESTROY IT	13
THE MORAL AGENCIES TO BE USED:—	
1. <i>Prayer to God</i>	14
2. <i>Individual Testimony</i>	17
3. <i>Associated Action</i>	19
4. <i>The Press</i>	23
5. <i>The Legislature</i>	25

6. <i>The Pulpit</i>	29
7. <i>The Church</i>	34

The first of these to be combined with the rest, and the last the most important of the remaining six—*Church-Exclusion* being the decisive thing.

THE <i>War-Power</i> RECOGNIZED, BUT NOT CLAIMED, AS A NORMAL CHRISTIAN AGENCY	42
DUTY TO OUR COLORED POPULATION NOT IN BONDS .	43
APPEAL TO CHRISTIANS TO APPLY THESE TESTS, AND AROUSE TO FAITHFUL EFFORT	43

SEPARATION FROM SLAVERY.

*How shall Christians and Christian Churches
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THE object of our Saviour's mission is thus clearly defined in the New Testament:—

“FOR THIS PURPOSE THE SON OF GOD WAS MANIFESTED, THAT HE MIGHT DESTROY THE WORKS OF THE DEVIL.”

For this purpose came he into the world; for this he labored, suffered, and died; and for this he gathered his followers into a visible church, and clothed them with a perpetual commission. His doctrines are a living protest and battle-cry, and his true church is a working enginery of destruction against every

form of human wickedness, individual and social. The Christian faith is in its nature assailant; the Christian church is by its constitution aggressive; the Christian life is, of necessity, a ceaseless conflict. A constant challenge to the believer is every work of evil, to be assaulted in Christ's name, and destroyed by the power of his gospel. The professed disciple, who indulges in the sin which he is called to exterminate, forfeits Christian fellowship. The company of professed believers that tolerates and countenances the evil which it is summoned to destroy, renounces in that act the character of a Christian church, and denies its Master. This is the force of the apostle's declaration, already quoted in part: "*He that committeth sin is of the devil, for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.*" On this plain scriptural basis will rest our main answer to the inquiry before us.

The Christian religion having come into the world on this sublime errand, — to eradicate whatever is morally wrong, and introduce whatever is righteous and lovely, — Christians and Christian churches can fully ascertain their responsible connection with any evil only by estimating fairly their power to aid in its removal. They are responsible for a sinful practice which they may not personally indulge nor defend, and which they may even condemn, so far as they fail to exert a possible influence against it. Apathy or inaction is less culpable than sympathy with wrong, or connivance at it, would be in the same individual ; and this, again, would be less heinous than direct participation in it ; but the simple neglect of feasible action involves personal responsibility before God. This is a vital principle of Christianity, and admits of the broadest application ; its righteousness is impartial, and its benevolence is universal.

The evil works which are to be destroyed by fuller manifestations of Christ in his mem-

bers, though bearing the same moral relation to the Christian communion the world over, do not sustain the same providential relation to all Christian churches. They may all be reached, in a greater or less degree, through the prayers and labors of every part of Christendom, and to this extent they create a common obligation. The darkness of paganism, for instance, in every land, appeals to every soul on the earth that is enlightened from above, and the claim which it enforces is acknowledged by every one who consistently offers the daily petition, *Thy kingdom come!* But a special responsibility rests upon those who either have had a special agency in producing or perpetuating an evil, or who may be favored with special providential facilities for effecting its removal. Hence the errors and sins which may be prevalent in our own land, though not a matter of indifference to any part of the Christian world, devolve a special duty upon American Christians. The question which we are to consider is, in form,

unlimited ; but as it has particular reference to our own country — to American slavery and American Christians and churches — our discussion will take that complexion, though dealing with principles which are universal.

The question assumes that slavery is radically opposed to Christianity ; and there is no truth in Christian ethics, and no fact relating to practical morality, which may with more propriety be taken for granted. A system which begins by subverting in a human being, and usurping for selfish ends, that lordship over the inferior creation and that self-control which the Creator conferred upon each individual soul, and which, by the divine constitution, belongs to man as man, and is essential to his natural dignity as a creature of reason and to his moral responsibility as an heir of immortality — a system which practically abrogates the whole code of social morality embodied in the Decalogue, desecrating and destroying the ties and obligations founded on the relations which mankind sustain to one

another, commencing with domestic purity and the hallowed affections of home, the fountain of all social virtue, and regarded by God of such vital importance that he engraved the rules which regulate and protect them on tables of stone, and more permanently on the consciences of men, as moral statutes perpetually binding — a system which contradicts both the moral law and the law of Christian love, violating every attribute of Christianity as illustrated in the life and teachings of its Founder, and epitomized in the Golden Rule which he gave to his followers — a system which, to the degree of its prevalence, has filled every community with ignorance and debasement, with profligacy and violence, with suffering and sorrow, and which confronts the Nineteenth Century of the Christian Era, and shames its boasted civilization with a barbarism unsurpassed in heathen lands — such a system, known and read of all men, and bearing its most bitter fruits in our own land and our own day, renders any array of arguments

and facts in demonstration of its unchristian character wholly superfluous.

From all responsibility for this organized outrage on humanity, this daring sin against Heaven, how shall the followers of Christ best free themselves? Obviously, by doing all which they properly can for its extermination; nothing less than this will acquit them before God. This calls us to consider the various methods by which they may suitably assail the evil, and which they are to employ until it is destroyed. These methods are the most simple lever^s of moral influence, and at the same time the most potent, which God has placed in human hands.

Let it be premised, that to the effectual wielding of these forces three things are requisite.

First. A knowledge of the system of slavery, in its principles and in its developments; of the hollowness of its claim to the exercise of an irresponsible guardianship not founded on any natural relation, and which, so far from

having been established by God, is in direct conflict with all the relations, domestic, social, and civil, which He has ordained, and nullifies them all—the master's authority being not less arbitrary and unjust because it may be mild, its kindest assertion being a positive cruelty—the slave's subjection, with whatever incidental benefits attended, being not the less an audacious intrusion between the soul of man and the Creator to whom he is accountable, and in the denial of his right to himself, whatever other claims it may concede, striking at the very “life of the soul,” and essentially inhuman and infernal—the inherent wickedness of the system being wrought into all its practical details, and its actual results sadly manifest in the daily experience of its victims.

Second. A hearty detestation of oppression, and a lively sympathy with the weak and the wronged; a wholesome spirit, not bitter, censorious, or vindictive, not addicted to petty personal resentments, but tender-

hearted in its compassion for the suffering, clear-sighted in its perception of equity and duty, and high-toned in its fearless vindication of truth and righteousness, rebuking selfishness and injustice, and unsparing in its denunciation of the guilty spoilers of humanity; and while discriminating in its judgments, and abounding in Christian charity, not tolerating in either friend or foe any apparent deviation from the cardinal principles of justice, or any deficient recognition of the sacred ties of human brotherhood.

Third. A profound conviction that Christianity is adequate, under God, to the extinction of the spirit of oppression and the banishment from the world of every form of opposing iniquity—a conviction resting not only on the precepts and promises of the Bible, but entering into the religious consciousness of every true convert to Christ, his experimental acquaintance with the gospel assuring him that it is fitted to meet the wants of mankind, to alleviate their woes, to redress their

wrongs, and fill the earth with the love and peace of heaven — and his observation of the conquests which it has already won, confirming his confidence in its final and complete triumph.

These positions, firmly held, pledging both our personal freedom from complicity with slavery and our readiness to bear a part in every Christian and judicious effort to bring it to an end, prepare us to glance at the appointed means.

1. *Prayer to God.* — This is our unfailing resource ; it precedes every other agency, and combines with every other. We are powerless apart from the blessing of the Almighty, and with this we need not despair of any issue which is practicable and desirable. He can shed light upon the darkest problem of human society, and he can quell its most fearful disorder. To this end he is accessible to the entreaties of his children, and will lend a gracious ear to the voice of their importunity. He heareth even the sighing of the needy,

and hath encouraged us to resort to him in every emergency, and depend on him for every supply. That which mocks our strength and baffles our wisdom is simple and easy to him, and safe in his keeping are the events which lie beyond our own control. He can direct us in the use of appropriate instrumentalities, and prosper us in plans which his wisdom has prompted, and crown with success the humble endeavors in which his hand is gratefully recognized. Every righteous cause, dear to his friends, is unspeakably dear to him, and he will appear for it in glory when their patience has wrought its perfect work, and their faith has borne its triumphant test.

This, which is true of every good enterprise, may be affirmed with emphasis of that which seeks to break the fetters of the bondman, for it is one which, in other ages, has drawn forth the very heart of God, and elicited sublime tokens of his special approval. The virtuous indignation which glows in every ingenuous breast at the oppression which culminates in

the degradation of the slave, is but a faint copy of the holy displeasure which has flamed forth from his soul against this crying injustice, in past generations, and the stern memorials of which appear along the track of the centuries. The thought which touched the hearts of the Israelites in their house of bondage, and bowed their heads in worship when the hour of their deliverance struck, was the reflection that God had looked upon their affliction, had seen their oppression, and heard their cry, and was about to interpose for them with terrible majesty ; and the adoring strains which, on more than one occasion, ascended from that ransomed host, were not more devout and grateful than the simple prayers and praises which, at this day, are poured from the full hearts of the enfranchised slaves along our southern borders over their sudden deliverance from a bondage more grievous than the Egyptian, and which will be shared by their brethren as fast as they emerge into freedom. Now, as then, the Lord is a refuge for the oppressed ;

now, as ever, he judgeth the poor of the people, and saveth the children of the needy, and breaketh in pieces the oppressor. And it is not the least of our encouragements to approach the throne of grace in behalf of thousands of Christ's little ones, whose rights are trodden down, that our petitions will ascend, in concert with theirs, to Him who, we are assured, will regard the prayer of the destitute, and will not despise their prayer.

2. *Individual Testimony.*—The fountain of the moral influences which pervade society and move the world, under God, is often so small and secluded as to be scarcely recognized. Like the spring in the Andes, which swells into the Amazon with its world of waters, is the testimony for the truth, uttered by some solitary, and perhaps obscure, individual, and which, glancing from heart to heart and from province to province, gains an ever-widening horizon, surmounts all barriers and bounds, and traverses "the eternal years of God." An expression of individual opinion,

slighted at the time, may be pregnant with the destinies of communities. The moral forces which rule society are but an aggregate of individual testimonies ; and when they embody not the truth, but personal passion and prejudice, they melt away, in time, before a counter sentiment which, starting in some just breast, constantly accumulates strength, under the law just stated, and becomes at length invincible.

An evil which can be reached and destroyed only through the power of public opinion, consequently devolves upon every individual, high and low, the duty of bearing testimony against it. There is not a person whose avowed opinion is without influence, and no one has a right to withhold that influence. Every man who regards slavery as an evil is bound, on suitable occasions, to give utterance to that sentiment, and propagate it as widely as possible. Every one can thus aid in augmenting that tide of salutary condemnation which will finally overwhelm the

institution. Some can contribute, in this respect, far more than others; but every individual can make an appreciable and acceptable offering to the general fund. To those who may be debarred from other means of influence, the two which have now been named are open and inviting. Prayer and personal testimony are the heritage and the privilege of every rational being under the government of God. And at the present time, in this our land, there is an urgent demand that all who wear the name of Christ should bear a faithful testimony in behalf of the least of his outraged brethren, in whose persons he is suffering, and be living witnesses for freedom and for the Christ of freedom.

3. *Associated Action*.—The moral influence of the voluntary association of individuals for a definite purpose has been fully demonstrated, and though, like every moral agency, it is liable to grave perversion, it may be, as it has been, an incalculable power for good. It is founded on a true philosophy, being the ap-

plication of a social remedy to a social grievance. Without concert and combination individual action must be more or less desultory, and much of its force will be wasted. By being collected and concentrated it can often accomplish results to which any single effort, or any series of such efforts, would be wholly inadequate. Agencies which are feeble singly, may be collectively mighty, especially when each is made stronger by the reflex influence of the whole; and when their augmented strength is judiciously expended, obstacles with which they could not cope separately give way before their united onset. The history of every great reformation illustrates this truth, and it will, doubtless, be repeated in future reforms. The early achievements of the Temperance Cause in this country are a signal monument of the moral efficacy of a voluntary combination in changing the sentiments and social habits of a people; and the example will never be lost. It offers the readiest channel for the widest diffusion of the

facts and reasonings on which every popular cause must rest its appeal, and is indispensable to its highest success. And when both church and state are leagued with the wrong, or recreant to the duty of withstanding it, this often opens a door of hope and deliverance to the suffering masses. Still it is not a sovereign prescription for any social evil, and is to be relied on only as an auxiliary in the work. It has wrought an efficient service in the agitation of the slavery question in this and other lands from the beginning, and it will continue to be used until the last slave has been liberated. Those who are agreed in sentiment will combine their sympathies and energies in joint labors for the object; and that this should be done far more generally and effectively than it has been, must be obvious to all who have watched the unequal struggle. The burden which is now bravely borne by a few, should be shared by the multitude who profess to believe in the rights of man. Every association which is laboring,

with singleness of aim, for the overthrow of slavery, is entitled not only to the sincere respect, but also, as far as practicable, to the cordial coöperation and support of every lover of freedom and every friend of humanity.

Besides the class of associations which make the extinction of slavery their leading object, there are organizations devoted to some other humane or religious end which have it in their power to give much incidental furtherance to this — such as charitable, missionary, (foreign and domestic,) Bible, and tract societies, and kindred enterprises of benevolence and philanthropy. There is not one of these, not strictly local, which in its appropriate sphere may not exhibit a practical sympathy with the cause of the slave, and some of them may be its most efficient helpers. Their growing disposition to meet this claim must be encouraged, and this service insisted on, by Christians who employ them as the almoners of their benefactions. And in this department of associated effort, as well as in

the two preceding, the great body of Christ's disciples may effect a more complete divorce from all responsible connection with slavery.

4. *The Press.* — This is one of the prime elements of our modern civilization, and probably in no nation is its influence, both for good and for evil, so deep and wide-spread as it is in ours. This may be said, without hesitation, respecting its periodical issues, and especially its weekly and daily journals. They penetrate the remotest corner, reaching every class in every section of the free states, and mold the views and purposes of a people given to reading and discussion on every subject. The leaders of public opinion in our land are those who gain the public attention through the press. As a vehicle of free thought and an organ of reform, its power can hardly be over-estimated; and in the conquests which have been won by the friends of equal rights, it has nobly led the van. In no department of moral influence has their advantage over their adversaries been more conspicuous than in this.

Slavery has no genuine literature. Its atmosphere is stifling to the moral refinements, the generous sentiments, and the glorious aspirations in which true Genius delights, and which lend a glow, and grace, and charm to her finest creations: Slavery is shocking to her pure ideals, and her chosen resorts are ever the homes and the haunts of Liberty. Still there have been miserable apologists for slavery, for on the side of the oppressor there is power; and their sophistry has been exposed, and their apostasy rebuked, through the press, by the champions of the free principles which form the life of our civil institutions; who have also performed an invaluable service in enlightening the ignorant and arousing the indifferent.

This service is not completed, and the spirit of opposition and obloquy is not exhausted. The somber facts of oppression are still to be gathered and arranged before the public mind; the principles of eternal justice are still to be rehearsed, forgotten obligations are still to be

proclaimed in unwilling ears, and the burden of the ancient prophets is to be borne and recorded anew. In volume, and treatise, and tract, and through the columns of more ephemeral, but not less influential, publications, the claims of the enslaved are to be pressed, and the moral duties of freemen inculcated. Every gift in this department is imperatively called for; and those who have it not can associate with it, in others, a material and moral aid, not less essential, in the way both of supply and of distribution, in rendering the press a yet more powerful engine for the destruction of slavery.

5. *The Legislature.* — We use this term in no restricted sense, but in its broad signification, as denoting the supreme power in the state—the men who make the laws and shape the policy of the nation. We live under a complex government, and there is no single assembly of men in our republic, like the Parliament of Great Britain, to which the term is exclusively applicable. For, although on many

questions the Congress of the United States is supreme within its boundaries, as the Parliament is supreme within the British realm, there are others on which the supremacy is lodged in the several states, and resides in their respective legislatures. For our purpose it is not necessary to distinguish between these bodies, as we refer under this head to all who exercise legislative functions, whether in national or state relations.

With reference to the institution of slavery, there are two classes of legislators in our country. The first comprises those within whose proper jurisdiction it exists, and who have direct control over it within those bounds. This circle includes, of course, all who bear the responsibility of its legal perpetuation in any section of the land. It is the creature of municipal law, and being contrary to natural right, and unrecognized by the law of nations, it could not exist for a day under constitutional forms, without special legislative sanction. And no human obligation can

be more sacred or weighty than that which rests upon every legislative body, to deliver the territory, whatever it may be, which is covered by their protection, from the curse of slavery. To every such assembly in this land the message of the Lord to the house of David has long been addressed in monitory tones, and falls upon our ears to-day like the accents of doom — “*Execute judgment in the morning, and deliver him that is spoiled out of the hand of the oppressor, lest my fury go out like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings.*”

The other class embraces those within the limits of whose authority this evil does not exist, and who, consequently, can not reach it by direct enactment. All which can be required of them is, that within their prescribed sphere, and to the verge of their lawful jurisdiction, they favor the spirit of liberty and repress the spirit of slavery. And so complicated with all our affairs has this question become, through our delicate federal and state

relations, and through the action of moral causes, which are confined to no territorial limits, that there is not a legislative body in the country on which there has not been forced the opportunity and the duty of placing in the statute book some record of its regard for freedom and right. Even those most remote from the seat of the slave power, as well as those adjacent to it, have had occasion to erect some sea-wall against its encroachments.

Christian men who sustain legislative trusts are not the only Christians who, in this direction, are called upon to absolve themselves from all responsible connection with slavery. The responsibility of what they may either do, or fail to do, is shared by those who elect them to office. It begins at the polls, and every Christian freeman must answer to God and to his country for the vote which he there casts. And as a nation we can not be far from destruction, if recent developments have not impressed Christian voters with the ne-

cessity of bestowing their suffrages exclusively on the known friends of impartial liberty. The man who is false to freedom can not be trusted on any question, and the man who is true to freedom can not widely err on any other political subject. What other question, indeed, can have, in this generation, a transcendent importance in our national councils? Christian citizens, who do not regard our civil compact as a covenant with death, must make it a covenant of national life, by consenting to clothe with civil authority only the tried defenders of human rights. Our political regeneration, and with it our political absolution from slavery, will be complete, when it is once settled that none but uncompromising lovers of liberty and haters of oppression can be elected to office under our government.

6. *The Pulpit.*—The great office of the Christian preacher is to proclaim the messages of grace and salvation to the lost and perishing. His grand, central theme is the cross of Christ—the redemption of fallen man

through a suffering and atoning Saviour; and his ministrations must be comparatively barren if this and its cognate themes are not brought distinctly before the minds of his hearers, and pressed upon their consciences and hearts. These truths are the gospel of their salvation, and through God's blessing on its faithful presentation their souls are to be saved.

When hopefully converted to Christ, they are to be instructed in Christian doctrine and duty, in religious knowledge and good works; and were there no wanderers to be reclaimed, this service would task, not irksomely, the entire resources of the ministry of the word. The harmony of a scriptural faith, the consistency and beauty of a Christian morality, and the symmetry of a religious character, are to be realized. And their attainment demands the discussion, in the pulpit, of all questions of practical morality—all the sentiments, institutions, and usages of society, in their moral features and bearings. The views to

be adopted and the feelings and practices to be renounced by one who would bear the cross of Christ and be imbued with his spirit, the graces to be cultivated and the services to be performed by every faithful disciple, are to be unfolded, not abstractly, but in their application to the opinions and habits actually prevalent in society. How can a preacher of the truth discharge this duty in a country on which rests the dark shadow of slavery, who does not train his hearers to abhor injustice and oppression, to compassionate the weak and vindicate the wronged, to lift the trampled from the dust, and to remember them that are in bonds as bound with them? How can a people be instructed in the ways of righteousness, who, in this relation, as in every other, are not taught to love their neighbor as themselves, to remember that every child of calamity to whom they can show mercy is their neighbor, and to do to others even as they would that others should do to them? No pastor can meet the moral exigencies of

his own flock who does not infuse into their hearts a sense of the wickedness of slavery, and inspire them with the purpose to aid, by all feasible means, in its overthrow.

But the preacher has duties outside of his particular charge: as a public teacher, he sustains a special relation to the public morals. All the needed reformatations of society he is to help forward with a vigorous hand; and in the moral battle which is now waging for the very life of the nation, his trumpet must not give an uncertain sound. He need not, and must not, descend into the noisy and stormy arena of political strife, but through the channels of moral influence accessible to him, and compatible with the high spiritual functions of his office, he is to rally all within his reach to an effective opposition to the gigantic foe of our republic — the foe to its principles and its peace — a slaveholding despotism. This service clearly belongs to the post which he occupies; and the observation of an eminent New England orator, (Webster,) when speak-

ing of the slave trade on Plymouth Rock, is not less appropriate in reference to slavery itself, and complicity with it: "If the pulpit be silent, whenever or wherever there may be a sinner bloody with this guilt, within the hearing of its voice, the pulpit is false to its trust."

This topic relates primarily to Christian ministers, yet not to them exclusively, inasmuch as all Christians have an influence in giving tone to the pulpit. As an ambitious and worldly church will bring down a spiritual ministry to its own level, or will displace it for some other, — as a church glowing with love to Christ and to the souls of men will find its quickened desires met in the ministry of its choice, or will resort to some other, — so a church to which the cause of freedom and of Christ's poor is dear, will morally compel from its pulpit, sooner or later, the utterance of its own cherished convictions; and in this incidental way, as well as in the more direct, all may promote their more complete exemption from any responsibility for slavery.

7. *The Church.*—We have reached the last of the several moral agencies which we proposed to enumerate, through which Christian men can consecrate their active exertions to the overthrow of this great evil. The first-named, as was remarked, has no separate province, but is to be incorporated with the rest, and is vital to them all. Of the six remaining, while each of the others is so important, in its place, that the specification of it seemed to us essential to the completeness of the discussion, we deem this last by far the most potential. The preceding, indeed, become powerless without the concurrence of this. We here come openly and squarely upon the scriptural platform which was given at the outset, and are enabled to offer a testimony in deed as well as in word—to assail the evil by an act more significant and decisive than any verbal protest.

The church of the living God is the pillar and ground of the truth. In its purity it is the salt of the earth, in its proper brightness

it is the light of the world; but when its savor is lost it is refuse, when its luster is quenched it is darkness and dreariness. Its divine Founder loved it, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. It can preserve this character of unsullied loveliness, and accomplish its original design, only by receiving to its membership, or retaining in it, none but those whose lives are irreproachable. When a profession of religion is made to cover and excuse a moral delinquency, or when a professed disciple of Christ is upheld in a practice which a strict morality condemns, a fearful wound is inflicted on the cause of public virtue. The sin which is welcomed to the bosom of the church, and christened with a pious phrase, is more demoralizing than bold and unblushing impiety, because it changes the truth of God into

a lie. Against this operation an incessant watch is needful, for wherever the Christian faith is revered a prevalent immorality instinctively seeks to shelter itself behind a religious profession, and obtain Christian recognition, in order that it may enjoy the fruits of sinful indulgence without the disgrace which is its natural penalty. American slavery has, in this generation, displayed unusual daring in this attempt, with an arrogance befitting its mournful success. It has arrayed its hideous deformity in the sacred robes of Christ, and demanded, not tolerance and license alone, but also obeisance and reverence. It has entered the pulpit, and expounded to listening congregations the parable of the Good Samaritan, and discoursed on the attributes of that Being who hath made of one blood all nations of men, and hath proclaimed himself no respecter of persons. It has presided at the communion table in the name of Him who came to preach deliverance to the captives, and to set at liberty them that are bruised, and who gave

himself a ransom for all. It has distributed the touching symbols of his passion, and partaken of the sacrament, and prayed, and praised, and exhorted; and all the while the hire of the laborers who had reaped down its fields, which it had kept back by fraud, was crying, and the cries of those unrequited reapers were entering into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

What shall be done with this monstrous imposture and iniquity? There can be but one answer. CAST IT OUT OF THE CHURCH OF CHRIST. This will kill it, and nothing else will. Spare it here, and the weapons of truth will fall upon it as harmlessly as the barbed irons rattled on the scales of leviathan. Expel it hence, and in no other retreat can it draw the breath of life.

Fortunately, this doctrine is not mere theory; it was tested, with the happiest results, in some of the New England churches, near the close of the last century. Foremost in the movement was the church in Newport,

Rhode Island, under the pastoral care of the venerable SAMUEL HOPKINS, whose fame as a theologian has not eclipsed his higher renown as a philanthropist. This seaport was then a slave mart, and the gains of the iniquitous traffic had enriched the leading families around him, and enlisted in its support, as usual, the most powerful social influences. He boldly attacked the whole system, and "rising up before his slaveholding congregation, demanded, in the name of the Highest, the opening of the prison doors to them that were bound." Had he rested here, his work would have been incomplete, and he nobly consummated it by taking the matter into his church, and bringing to bear upon it the power of her discipline. The following was her decision, as entered on her records by his own hand:—

"Voted, That the slave trade and the slavery of the Africans, as it has taken place among us, is a gross violation of the righteousness and benevolence which are so much

inculcated in the gospel; and therefore we will not tolerate it in this church."

The author of this resolution was a keen metaphysician, but his soul was too earnest in this business to be playing with abstractions, and he did not entertain himself nor the church with dialectical subtilties on the question whether slaveholding might not, under some conceivable circumstances, be temporarily permissible. With the combined force of the robust theologian and the practical reformer, his sturdy blow was aimed at the concrete evil, and smote it fairly and fatally. To this rule the members of the church, including its office-bearers, were required to conform; and the slaves whom it manumitted were not plantation gangs, driven by an overseer, and dwelling in separate huts, but the quiet inmates of Christian homes, doing household service. The relation itself was felt to be wrong, and was struck at as grossly selfish and unrighteous. And by this process did a Christian church and pastor absolve them-

selves from all responsible connection with slavery.

Can any better plan be suggested? Could any thing be more admirable than the spirit of the whole proceeding? Does it not plainly indicate the baptism which is now needed by the churches, of every name, in our land? In taking this ground, we disclaim an authoritative judgment on any individual — which is never within the province of any mortal. We do, however, declare our conviction that any man who, at this day, regards and treats a human being as in any sense a chattel, and as not in every sense a fellow-man, whatever pretensions to piety he may advance, can not, and does not, furnish that *credible evidence* of Christian character which may entitle him to Christian fellowship. We do proclaim our solemn belief that, for her own sake and the slave's sake, it is high time the church of Christ were relieved of the scandal of slaveholding, and that, for the world's sake, it is high time this stumbling-block were removed

out of the way of the chariot of the Lord's salvation.

If any confirmation of our views were needed, none could be offered more striking than the passing incidents of the Great Rebellion, which will be known in history as the Slaveholders' Rebellion. This, with its shocking barbarities, is the legitimate offspring of slavery—the natural resort of those who fear not God nor regard man, and whose only recourse to arrest a moral influence which threatened to sweep away their power, was to plunge the land into the abyss of war. For this reason, and for no other, its leaders committed the enormous crime of firing upon the honored flag to which they had sworn allegiance, and assailing with arms an established and equitable government—profaning a divine ordinance, and lifting a parricidal hand against the country to which their filial love and service were due. The result is, that the churches which have refused to repudiate slavery, are now called to decide the question, Whether

the fellowship of Christ's house shall be extended not only to slaveholders, but also to rebels and traitors, fresh from the slaughter of their brothers, sacrificed to the sacred cause of constitutional government? This new issue involves, in our judgment, no new principle, but it illustrates the breadth of the principle embraced in the original question.

We have not included the summary war-power in the list of agencies by which Christians are to seek the emancipation of the slave. A Christian ruler or military commander may be required, in the providence of God, to resort to this method, and Christian soldiers to carry it into willing execution. God is now freeing our bondmen by the red hand of battle, and we do not know that his sovereign wisdom has not selected this as a prominent mode of their release. But this procedure is extraordinary and exceptional, and it is natural that we should confine our discussion to those moral agencies which commend themselves, with the pressure of a constant and perma-

nent obligation, to the disciples of the Prince of Peace.

Confining our discussion to the question of slavery, we have not traced its bearing on a closely related subject — our duty to our colored population not in bonds, whose condition is deeply depressed by the enslavement of their brethren. In some of the free states enactments have been passed against the people of color, which breathe the same spirit of injustice and inhumanity as the dark Slave Code, and the public sentiment which sustains them can be hardly less offensive to Heaven. And it is proper, in this connection, that Christians and Christian churches should be reminded of the Christian treatment which is due to the African race in our land, and that the great problem which now tests our American Christianity will not be satisfactorily solved until she has proved herself adequate, under God, both to lift from the neck of the prostrate slave the heel of the oppressor, and to restore our colored brother to his proper place in the Human Family.

May we respectfully ask the Christian reader, who has favored these pages with an attentive perusal, to address to himself the candid and conscientious inquiry, — Whether he has fully met the requirements of Christian duty in his treatment of the institution of slavery? Whether, through the various channels which God has opened to him, he has poured a current of moral influence as broad and deep as possible, to sweep away every vestige of this desolating curse from the face of our otherwise fair, peaceful, and happy country? May we entreat him to look around, and ask himself what further effort, individual or associated, at whatever cost of ease or reputation, he can put forth, in humble dependence on God, toward securing to all the inhabitants of this land the priceless blessings of liberty?

Happy would it have been for our nation if the work of purification which was commenced in the New England churches four-score years ago had been continued through the length and breadth of the republic. She

would now be reposing beneath the smile of the Creator, free from the blight of slavery, from the horrors of civil war, and from the dread of future judgments. She would have a sure basis of domestic prosperity in the free labor and the cheerful homes of the sons of toil, rejoicing in the fruits of honest industry, and a basis not less sure of foreign respect and renown in the powerful leadership of a Christian civilization — a name of blessing, the world over, to the friends of liberal institutions and the proscribed advocates of human rights, to whom she is now a humiliation and a reproach.

For the past there is no reparation; the seal of eternity is upon it, and it changeth not; but its bitter memories admonish us to be faithful to the high and holy demands of the future. By our sympathy with the despoiled and oppressed, by our regard for the peace and honor of our country and the stability of our government, by our love of liberty and our hatred of tyranny, by our interest in the

purity and prosperity of the church of Christ, by our reverence for the principles of divine justice and our devotion to the cause of human progress, and by our zeal for the glory of our Master, let us be incited to do our utmost to rescue our country and our age from the heavy woe of slavery, and hasten the coming among us of THE WORLD'S DELIVERER AND KING !

“He comes to break oppression,
To set the captive free,
To take away transgression,
And rule in equity.”